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Memory In The Flesh (Modern Arabic Writing)



Synopsis

This prize-winning novel, the first to be written by an Algerian woman in Arabic, is concerned with Algeria's struggle against foreign domination as well as its post-independence struggle with itself and the fate of revolutionary ideals in a post-revolutionary society. The story, spanning more than four decades of Algerian history, from the 1940s to the 1980s, revolves around a love affair between Khaled, the middle-aged militant who turns to painting after losing his left arm in the struggle, and the fiction writer and young daughter of his friend the freedom fighter Si Taher, all brilliantly told through Khaled's voice. It was features such as this convincing embodiment of a male voice alongside narrative techniques in which the author subtly joins the achievements of world literature with that of local storytelling and traditional modes of narration that particularly impressed the judges who awarded this novel the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ahlam Mosteghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh* *Memory in the Flesh* is the first novel written by an Algerian woman in Arabic that has become a best seller. It was awarded the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 1998 in recognition of its distinction. Ahlam Mosteghanemi is able to represent more than four decades of Algerian history as they interweave with the characters' trajectories and memories, from the revolt of 1945 in East Algeria to 1988 when, Khaled, the protagonist-narrator is writing a memoir of his in the form of the novel we read. *Memory in the Flesh* is dedicated to both the

author's militant father, who was engaged in the national liberation struggle, and to her literary father, the Francophone Algerian poet and novelist, Malek Haddad (1927-78), who decided after the independence of Algeria in 1962 not to write in a foreign language any more, and he ended up not writing at all. Haddad's verbal traces in *Memory in the Flesh*, whether in allusions or intertextual references, attest to the literary kinship between the two writers. The issue of filiation and affiliation is a prominent motif in this novel. Ahlam Mosteghanemi articulates the drama of contemporary Algeria in the language denied to colonized Algerians. Her novel partakes in cultural decolonization of her country on two levels: it reappropriates Algerian history and presents the ravages of colonialism from the point of view of its victims; and also she repossesses the mother tongue by writing in the language of the victims with passion and mastery. But the novel is not only about the Algerian struggle against foreign domination, it is also about the complex post-independence problems facing the emerging nation.

"Footfalls echo in the memory down the passage which we did not take towards the door we never opened into the rose-garden."-T.S.EliottI devoured Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *"Memory in the Flesh"* in Arabic in one night in 1999. It was impossible to put it down without finishing. The emotional journey, I experienced with this novel, left me dizzy, in much the same way the great late poet, Nizzar Kabbani described his reaction to this masterpiece. Now, the author is being accused, by some reviewers, of being a carbon copy of the great late poet Nizzar Kabbani. I simply smile and think how wonderful it is that Nizzar got to read this piece of art before his death and acknowledged the uniqueness of Mosteghanemi's talent. He died knowing that the language of love and peace is universal and will live onI kept the Arabic version of *"Memory in the Flesh"* next to my bed, with my favorite lines highlighted until it was translated into English. I doubted that the English translation would be felicitous to the original Arabic and maintain the power of a novel that is very dear to my heart. To my surprise, it took me one night to finish the English translation and to highlight nearly the identical lines that captured my heart in Arabic. I had to share this novel with all my close friends and professors, and now that I read ignorant cruel comments about the first novel written by an Algerian woman in Arabic, I am compelled to defend a great novel and a special author. After reading several reviews about this book, I decided that I will not read any reviews ever until I have written my own. Other's confused reviews only distract me from the work and make me focus on defending it instead.

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